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School crises: on and on

Once again the threat of a strike hangs over Chicago's public schools, and it is hard to find even a glimmer of hope that this latest in a long string of crises can be stalled off. The Board of Education is in a position somewhat like that of a family head who has mortgaged everything down to the kitchen sink and finally sees the creditors closing in.

The Chicago Teachers Union has presented a list of demands the board cannot possibly meet. Some of the demands are unrealistic or even outrageous, but in the main they go down the same track the board would like to follow—a general upgrading of the quality of education with a salary scale reflecting that high quality.

Yet the board, by overreaching its resources in past union settlements, has come to the point where it is proposing cutbacks instead of advances in order to keep its budget anywhere near a balance. From such a head-on confrontation arises the prospect of a long and futile strike with the children of Chicago the victims.

The frustration of the teachers is understandable. Why should they stand still or perhaps retreat when other salaried groups are making solid gains? Yet the board is unable to make the magic that will produce the needed money. This is no case of raising the price of the product in order to raise wages; the yardsticks of "productivity" do not apply.

Nor is this a case of a possible shutdown in the production of some article of commerce. What is being talked about is the possible closure of a most vital service in our society—the schools. The responsibility to keep that service going lies heavily on all parties to the dispute.

It is not responsible to say, as some union spokesmen have said, that the board should grant the teachers' demands, regardless of cost, through June and close the schools in September if the Legislature fails to come across with the cash. Public policy must not be made by blackmail. Nor is it responsible to assume, as some board members seem to be doing, that the avenues of revenue have been exhausted.

Instead of squaring off against each other, the teachers and the board should be working together to explore new ideas and to persuade the Legislature and the public at large that their plans for education are worthy of greater support. For in the long run the people must decide what value is to be put on the schools.

Given a determination on both sides to work through to a better deal for the schools, this crisis might still be resolved. And neither side dares forget that it is tampering with the welfare of the city's most priceless asset—its children.

Back to the China talks

The resumption of Warsaw talks between the United States and China can be viewed as merely adding another arena for prospectively endless jawing between parties holding virtually irreconcilable viewpoints. Paris, as one such theater, has already witnessed its share of frustrations.

And yet the agreement for the formal ambassadorial meetings to resume Jan. 20 after a two-year suspension is a hopeful development. There have been changes.

In the past two years the United States has had a change in administration; the Nixon administration has committed itself to ending the Vietnam War; administration spokesmen have indicated a desire to ease the friction with Red China, and to bring China into the community of nations.

For its part China has seen worsening relations with Russia and mounting strains at home. It has also witnessed an easing of tensions between Russia and the United States, to China's own increasing discomfiture.

Each nation, beset by its own set of social and economic problems, needs time and the chance to concentrate on those problems. Each side would benefit from trade and cultural relations and open communication with the other.

When Peking abruptly canceled the resumption of meetings scheduled for last February the United States had been on the verge of proposing a number of steps aimed at improving those relations. Since then President Nixon has taken some unilateral steps to unblock trade and travel between the two countries.

Perhaps China is now ready to reexamine these matters, even to take a step or two toward common ground. Even a very small step would be heartening.

The shock of hunger

One of the problems in combatting hunger is the difficulty of making affluent people believe and care that some other people are hungry. That gap can be bridged if the unhungry will take time to see a program that will be broadcast by Channel 11.

"To Feed the Hungry" will be broadcast Monday through Friday nights (and followed on Monday and Friday by reruns of "Town Meeting: Who's Hungry in Chicago?" which originated early in December). The repetitions should give everybody an opportunity to see it, and everybody should. It investigates Mayor Daley's claim that "there is no need for anyone being hungry in Chicago," examines the successes and failures of attempts to feed the hungry, and presents the commentary of experts.

Most important, it goes into the slums and into the homes of the hungry to prove that many people simply can't afford enough to eat. It is a disturbing, shocking program, but it could not be otherwise. Hunger should be disturbing and shocking too.

Rocket age shell game

If any new evidence were needed of the proliferating nature of defense costs it could be found in the new proposal for mobile "garages" for Minuteman missiles.

As part of a fundamental missile protection system already costing billions of dollars, the Minuteman sits in its concrete and steel launching silo — one Minuteman for one silo.

Now the Pentagon is worried lest increasing accuracy enable an enemy to vector right in on the missiles before they can be got off the ground.

The proposed answer is a circle of five silos built around the central silo, each a mile from the hub and connected with a conveyance system. The enemy thus could not tell, which of six silos the Minuteman was in at any given time, besides which the few minutes of radar warning time could enable the shifting of the missile from one silo to another after the attack had been launched.

We don't know what all this would cost, but nothing in the missile program ever comes in trailing less than nine zeros, plus inflation and cost overruns.

And no end is in sight. One offensive or defensive weapon development prompts a counteraction; the missile brought the antimissile missile, and the ABM brought the Hydra-headed MIRV. If security could be reached by some other road, and the billions reinvested in good works — what an explosion *that* could touch off in the quality of human life!

"We're running out of sleeping pills"

Police state happen here? It did

With the killings of the Black Panthers in Chicago, the right of dissent seriously in danger in the trial of the Conspiracy 7, and with proposed legislation like the omnibus internal security act under serious consideration, the terrors of a police state are being brought more sharply into focus than ever before in the history of our country.

What makes this even more frightening is the prospect of a silent mass afraid or indifferent to act until it is too late.

In 1942 I was a young boy of 4 living in Seattle. America had recently declared war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor and although my parents were concerned by the declaration, they were not deeply worried. My mother and I had been born in America, my father had lived in the U.S. over 25 years and had graduated from an American university.

Then on Feb. 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which in effect sentenced me and my parents, along with 110,000 other Japanese Americans, to concentration camps. This was done without being accused of a crime, with no right of defense, without any of the due processes of law guaranteed to all Americans.

We served out our sentence silently and only in retrospect do some of us view it with bitterness.

I was too young then to understand what was happening to me and my parents, but now I am older and I ask my parents, and those who lived during that time and who were old enough to act, why they allowed this to happen to us.

Why did so few speak out in defense, not so much for us, but for the very principles of democracy which we were then engaged in a war to defend?

The one clear answer that I get through the mass of rhetoric and rationalized polemics is that those who should have responded, those who should have raised their voices in protest did not do so, but instead remained silent.

Today, the premium which some would place on silence is indeed alarming. Within my lifetime I have seen its devastating effects once. I wonder if I am watching it occur again.

Chicago — HIROSHI KANNO

'Yesterday's silent majority now speaking'

When one stops to think about it, there is perhaps another silent majority, which has been silent much too long, considering the length of time mankind has been in existence.

These silent majorities include all of the poverty stricken peoples of the Earth, all groups discriminated against, all the children and students who have been shortchanged with a good education and environment, and women. I could go on.

Too long have these groups remained silent, perhaps not being aware of the lack of freedom they really do have. But too busily engaged in the grind of daily living to have time for those extras of life in order to demand a better way. Perhaps they have lacked a vision or hope that things can be or should be better.

But now they are speaking out. It is up to the whole world to listen and understand what they say.

Now with so much affluence, especially in our country, this gives all majority groups hope that there will be enough to share. So that all can be adequately fed, clothed, housed and educated—and thought well of by all mankind, not because of what they have, but for what they are—human beings.

Chicago — NITA HINELY

Your views of the news

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Just a few lines from one of your readers, one of the silent majority that is tired of remaining silent.

I am led to believe from what I read in the papers and hear on the news that the great majority of silent Americans are backing our President and backing the policies of our leaders in the Vietnam War.

I do not believe that a majority or even much of the minority silent or otherwise are backing them. I do believe that we are sitting back and letting our rights be taken away one by one, letting our money be squandered by fat, foolish, wealthy, inconsiderate leaders.

I realize that we are a people that dislike, in fact hate, trouble, hate to become involved, hate to take a stand, and normally allow ourselves to be crowded into all sorts of things that we do not condone or would not allow if we would take the time to think a little.

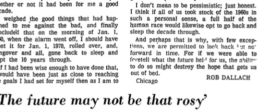
It's time we woke up if we expect to have any young men left, any prestige at all in the world and any rights that our forefathers were so careful to make provision for so many years ago.

Our image in the eyes of the world is shrinking fast, I am sure. We don't practice what we preach. We try to tell other countries that they should be peaceable, then we go half way around the world and ram our nose in where we aren't wanted.

I love this country of ours and I have helped fight for it, too, but really we cannot have one standard for the U.S. and another for other countries because most of the others are at least intelligent enough to see that we aren't what we say we are.

Let's bring our boys home, and now. Let's try to keep our own doorstep cleaned first and keep our noses out of other people's affairs and perhaps some day when we have tried to do what is right by all then we will regain that prestige that we have now lost.

Robinson, Ill. — M.K.



'The peril of being able to see the future'

On the morning of the last day of 1969, at the decadent decade end, I awoke looking back over the past 10 years to analyze whether or not it had been for me a good decade.

I weighed the good things that had happened to me against the bad, and finally concluded that on the morning of Jan. 1, 1960, when the alarm went off, I should have reset it for Jan. 1, 1970, rolled over, and, hangover and all, gone back to sleep and slept the 10 years through.

If I had been wise enough to have done that, I would have been just as close to reaching the goals I had set for myself then as I am to reaching today's goals, and I would have gotten myself into a lot less trouble and would've gotten more rest in the process.

I don't mean to be pessimistic; just honest. I think if all of us took stock of the 1960s in such a personal sense, a full half of the human race would likewise opt to go back and sleep the decade through.

And perhaps that is why, with few exceptions, we are permitted to look back but not forward in time. For if we were able to foretell what the future held for us, the ability to do so might destroy the hope that gets us out of bed.

Chicago — ROB DALLACH

'The future may not be that rosy'

Arthur J. Snider paints a glowing picture of the technological blessings that the 1970s will bring. But has he given some serious thought to the probable social consequences of some of these "blessings"?

The basic problem is that as our society becomes more and more tightly organized and technological, the power to make the decisions that influence the daily life of each individual becomes more and more concentrated in the hands of scientists and those who hire them. The individual has less and less ability to make the important decisions for himself and choose his own style of living.

I would also like to point out that, even from a strictly materialistic viewpoint, many scientists feel that the future looks far less rosy than is indicated in your articles on the 1970s.

For example, some scientists predict that in 10 or 15 years air pollution will be so bad that we will need a "semispace suit" to go outdoors. "We have no solution" to the problem, they add.

David Lyle, in a 1967 article in Esquire, reported that many responsible authorities hold an extremely gloomy view of the future because of the population explosion and environmental deterioration. One of them said, "We are coming to a situation in which the optimist will be the man who thinks that present living standards can be maintained."

Why should we continue to donate our tax money to the technologists through federal research grants so that they can use us as pawns in their game of "progress"?

Lombard — THEODORE J. KACZYNSKI

How to spend a trillion dollars

By Carl T. Rowan

WASHINGTON — In some quarters of government they are saying that during the 1970s we will spend a trillion (that's a thousand billion) dollars, public and private, to rebuild America's cities.

It seems hard to believe we Americans will really commit that kind of money to positive programs of human uplift; and even if we do, it is difficult to believe that we shall really revitalize our cities.

I have been reading Rodger Hurley's remarkable book on "Poverty and Mental Retardation" which Random House will publish in a week or so, and I am sorrowfully reminded of the real challenges and the ways we avoid them. I am reminded that:

- Poor, culturally deprived children comprise the majority of this nation's mentally retarded people.
- Some experts estimate that in the nation's 14 largest cities one child in every two is culturally deprived and is probably the victim of some degree of pseudomental retardation.
- A major cause of apparent mental retardation of the poor is inadequate nutrition, a point documented most convincingly by Hurley.

Rowan

The school lunch program was begun in 1946 to provide a hot, balanced meal for hungry, poor children. But the Agriculture Department, which runs the program, says that only 20,000,000 of the nation's 52,000,000 school children (under age 18) are served a school lunch on an average day.

An estimated 8,000,000 of these children come from families too poor to pay the cost of a school lunch, but only 3,000,000 of the poor children get meals at free or reduced cost.

Why? Reports in the last two years reveal a shocking picture of inadequate financing, maladministration, politics, discrimination and lack of facilities.

A comprehensive study made by five national women's organizations in 1968 charged that the lack of enforcement of national guidelines, together with totally inadequate financing, resulted in a crazy-quilt pattern for determining need.

A child could be eligible for free lunches in one district but not necessarily in a neighboring school. One youngster in a family might get a lunch while his brothers and sisters did not.

RODNEY E. Leonard, who administered the food programs of the Agriculture Department in 1967 and 1968, declares in a recent report prepared for the Children's Foundation that "at the state and local levels, where legal authority presumably rests, the child-nutrition programs are in incoherent shambles."

Instead of using the millions of dollars especially appropriated to supply free and reduced-price lunches to needy children, most states appear to have used the funds to hold down the prices of regular school lunches, he charges — "in effect, benefiting the middle-class youngsters and diluting a special effort to provide an adequate diet for the poor."

Lack of facilities is another roadblock. Several thousand schools with 10,000,000 students (nine-tenths of them in elementary grades) have no kitchens for providing lunches. Too often these are older schools in big-city ghettos or poor rural schools — the very ones with the highest concentrations of poor children.

The program also has fallen short in many places because it humiliates the recipients. Children who get the free or reduced-price lunches are often publicly identified (by different color lunch tickets or the calling of their names) and made to feel the stigma of poverty.

WE CAN SPEND billions on the brick and mortar, the freeways, the beautification of our cities. But we shall remain in trouble as long as the intellectual achievements of large portions of the population are limited by hunger-induced retardation.

A good place to start spending that trillion dollars is on a workable school lunch program, with first emphasis given to feeding the 5,000,000 children from poor families who presently are getting nothing.

The key to our cities inevitably must be the people who live in them. A complex maze of things must be done to lift the qualities and the outlooks of those residents. The provision of a bit of nutritious food each day for every child just might be deceptively fundamental and dramatic as the tool that opens doors to other areas of progress.

'Protest--it may help'

Ernest Fitzgerald, accept my thanks for doing an excellent job saving money for us taxpayers. I am writing my congressmen to protest your dismissal. The Pentagon evidently is running scared that you may uncover other outrageous expenditures.

When will the rest of the informed electorate get off their haunches and cry out against the firing of this obviously competent man? Protest — it may help.

As an over-30, I feel the frustrations that the young must feel with the manner in which our priorities are put upon us.

If Mr. Nixon wants to unite the country why threaten to veto a HEW bill as being inflationary? If a bill helps big businesses, then it becomes a good one. If it helps the poor and working classes, it is inflationary. What curious leadership.

Let's give approval to SALT talks and stop the Pentagon's insane buildup of ABM, ICBM, etc. Let's leave something of a decent world, clean up the pollution we've endured because of "instant profit."

I shudder to think that I've been responsible for bringing eight more lives into this mess.

I firmly believe in our country's Constitution and hope we can use it to reverse the awful trends that have come about — mostly by sitting back and being silent. Let us communicate — before it is too late.

Antioch, Ill. — R.T.